

A YEAR IN VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA.

(From a Correspondent of the "Manchester Examiner.")

VICTORIA, April 5.

DURING the night of the 27th of March, 1884, after a sixty hours' sail from San Francisco in the Canadian Pacific steamer *Mexico*, we rounded Cape Flattery and entered the straits of San Juan de Fuca. It was our intention, if circumstances proved favourable, to make our home in the Province of British Columbia, and it was, therefore, with more than the ordinary interest of tourists, and with hopeful expectation, that about six a.m. on the morning of the 28th we opened the door of our cabin and stepped on deck. For three days we had been gazing at the "waters" of a northern sea, and on Saturday night we fell asleep tired with watching the unbroken line of the distant American coast; but on Sunday we awoke to find ourselves in an earthly paradise that surpassed in loveliness anything that we had before even dreamt of or imagined. The scene that met our eyes was one of extreme beauty. On our right hand, as we steamed slowly up the straits, we had the snow-covered range of the Olympian mountains, apparently rising out of the blue water. On our left were the green fir-clad hills of Vancouver Island, their dark outlines showing distinctly against the bright blue background of the sky. The more distant landscape before us was at first hidden by a light haze, which the sun gradually dispelled, revealing a wider expanse of water, and then, farther away on the mainland, the isolated snow peak of Mount Baker. The dark fir hills of the island had an aspect of undisturbed restfulness which charmed us by its contrast with the glittering ripples of the straits and the dazzling brightness of the mountains. The Olympians form a long, continuous range, and, rising directly from the sea level, they impress one as more lofty and majestic than the hills, which vary from a deep to 6,000 feet, would lead one to expect. Mount Baker, in Washington territory, is between 10,000 and 11,000 feet high.

At Cape Flattery a pilot had been taken on board, and under his guidance we sailed slowly up the straits, keeping at a safe distance from the Vancouver shore to avoid the low line of rocks that stretch far out into the water and are known as the Cape Race rocks. After passing the Cape Race lighthouse we were told that we were in sight of Victoria; but that meant that Victorians who were on shore could see us, as the only sign of man's habitation that we could see were a few scattered farm-houses along the shore, half hidden by the thick forest surrounding them. Presently, however, we noticed a faint cloud of smoke hanging over the land at some little distance from the shore, and as we drew nearer, the smoke cleared, still remaining the only sign of the town that we could see. Then we passed the fine spacious harbour of Esquimalt, where the largest ships can enter at all times, and then the low rocky promontory that separates it from the Victoria Inlet. The Victoria Inlet is a beautiful bay, for it is a narrow channel through a narrow winding channel half a mile or more in length; but its bare rocky shores were preferred by the early settlers to the thickly wooded land that surrounds Esquimalt. A new wharf, for the better accommodation of the trade of the city, has recently been built at the entrance to the Inlet, and it was there that we landed on that lovely Sunday morning, just in time to enable one of our fellow-travellers, a young Presbyterian minister from Ontario, who was not encumbered with much luggage, to gratify his wish to attend church. We were welcomed a little while by the Custom House officer, leaving our luggage to be examined on Monday morning, we, too, were soon driving towards the still unseen town.

Ten minutes later the flags had mast high on the Government buildings told us the news of Prince Leopold's death, and we were all greeting for us; but it reminded us that, although we were separated from the land of our birth by a third of the earth's surface, we still formed part of that great nation whom sorrow and joy unite in one throng of sympathy, and that we were also in one of the many homes that her sons have made for themselves all over the world.

A quarter of an hour's drive through one of the suburbs of the town, past pretty one-story cottages and more ambitious villas, brought us to the Dravid Hotel, which is one of the few first buildings in Victoria. It is a large, square, flat-roofed house, destitute of any architectural pretensions, with small flat windows of uniform size and shape placed at uniform distances all round its four sides. To ensure dryness it is covered with a coat of vermilion paint, for owing to the quality of the clay the brick made in the Province is very porous. The Dravid Hotel is truly a gem in its management. It is "run" by a Frenchman and a German, whose near connections, we are told, had been culinary *chefs* in the households of no lesser personages than a King of Prussia and a Duke of Sutherland; and the King of Prussia's man, it was reported, had even had the honour of being temporarily transferred to the Queen of England's service during one of Her Majesty's visits to Germany. These illustrious luminaries are no more; but their "souls go marching on," and their traditions and recipes are faithfully handed down to posterity in the kitchen of the Dravid. Glorious Italian waiters, whose gentlemanly appearance was enhanced by the plain tweed clothes they wore, astonished us by the bewildering rapidity with which they enumerated the equally bewildering variety of dishes they offered us; while a comely Chinaman, with their quick count and their heads so as to be out of their way while they worked, officiated as chambermaids.

Victoria struck us at first sight as being not unlike a small market town in England; but the streets, as in all American and Canadian villages even, are broad and straight, running at right angles with one another. There are no unsuspected short cuts, no narrow winding lanes and alleys, and no quaint corners. But there is sufficient irregularity in the shops and houses, and except in the main streets, which have been made level by the free use of gunpowder, the wooden sidewalks are frequently interrupted by great blocks of rock. All sorts and sizes of houses are jumbled together, and "rockeries" and hovels, from which the paint has long ago disappeared, stand side by side, just as a brand new red brick building. A few pounds of paint would greatly improve the appearance of the town, but under the influence of an expected "boom" the Victorians are gradually effecting a more radical change by transferring the small and shabby cottages, mostly into the hands of the American and English, and these frame houses removed from their old location and slowly moving down a street; and it is interesting to watch its progress from day to day, until it is safely landed on a suburban lot. But no city made by man will ever be worthy of the natural beauties amidst which Victoria is placed. Only a New Jerusalem, with walls of Jasper and gates of pearl, would fitly fit into such a setting.

Five-and-thirty years ago, in the middle of this century, Victoria was merely a post of the Hudson Bay Company, and Fort Victoria and Bastion Street still remain to remind one of the days when it was necessary for the trading station to be sufficiently fortified to withstand an attack from the Indians. At that time the only direct communication with England was the ship that was yearly loaded in London, and in six slow months crossed the Atlantic ocean, rounded Cape Horn, and sailing up the Pacific coast of

America, through temperate and torrid zones, reached at last the distant northern settlement. We had the good fortune to have letters of introduction to a fine Scotch family, who were among these early settlers, and Mrs. — told me how, on the long voyage, her children became so much at home on board the ship that they cried when the time came to leave her, and how she had to throw shawls over their heads when they landed, lest they should be alarmed at the wild appearance of the Indians on the shore. In those days everything was dated from the arrival of the ship, and it is even said that weddings were at times put off until "the ship" should bring a fresh supply of rings.

In 1858 gold was discovered on the mainland, in the district of Caribon, on the Upper Fraser, and this news at once brought thousands of adventurers from all parts of the world, but especially from California, where a reaction had succeeded its first burst of prosperity. At one time, as many as 20,000 men were encamped on Beacon Hill, in the neighbourhood of Victoria, waiting to cross the Straits. The two British Provinces on the coast, so named by Vancouver, and the two Territories, British Columbia and New Caledonia in the interior, which owed its name to the patriotism of the two Scotchmen who were the first to make their way down the Fraser River to the sea. In 1858 these two territories were formed into the colony of British Columbia, but until the year 1861 the Island of Vancouver remained a distinct colony. On the 20th of July, 1871, British Columbia ceased to be a dependency of the Crown, and became one of the provinces of the Dominion of Canada. The gold fever was not of long duration, and the number of miners who existed in their labours was comparatively small; but although many of the immigrants left the country in disappointment, others remained and turned their attention to agriculture and the development of various industries. One man told me that he came out from England in 1861, intending to make his fortune as a miner, and on Christmas' '84, but after a separation of ten years, his wife followed him, and this province has become their home. A competency, if not a fortune, has been the result of patient work. This has been the experience of hundreds of others, who have made their fortunes by dreams of gold, and have since slowly reaped the fruits of daily industry.

In the spring of 1884, when we arrived in the colony, Victoria had enjoyed a quarter of a century of quiet peaceful days, during which steady, if not rapid, progress had been made. A month and a half ago, when we were in San Francisco had brought about more rapid communication with England and the East. In 1882 the North Pacific line was opened to Portland, and steamer connection established three times a week; while a few months after our arrival the number of Victorians who were in England to meet the exigencies of a daily mail. London and Liverpool business houses had sent out their representatives, and the Hudson Bay Company's ship was no longer the only one that sailed from England to Vancouver. Indeed, it was told, the company's ship, the *Albatross*, which had become more than equal to the demands made upon them, especially since Eastern Canadian firms had also sent their agents to the province.

Running parallel with Wharf Street is Government Street, where the principal retail shops are to be found. The Post Office, the banks, and the newspaper offices are also in Government Street; and conspicuous in the line of huggles and somewhat shabby larders, each with its team of horses, that stand for hire along the middle of the street, we noticed a solitary hansom, whose unimpeachable cockney driver, with his tall chimney pot, at once carried us in memory to Regent Street and Piccadilly. But, within a few months, Lord John Russell, as he was styled, made a successful land speculation at the supposed terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and returned the sale of his house and his own retirement into private life.

The north end of the town is known as Chinatown, and there at night several thousand Chinamen are crowded together, almost as thick as herrings in a barrel. During the day the Chinamen are engaged as domestic servants, or carrying round fish and vegetables to sell, or working in the heat and sugar factories, and in hundreds and hundreds of shops. They do the work which is rejected by the white man. Among them are a few merchants, who carry on a considerable business; but, with these exceptions, they are the servants of the white population. There is a great deal of Chinese in the Province, and the Chinese question is regarded by the people of British Columbia as one of the most important questions of the day. It is reckoned that there are nearly 15,000 Chinese already in the Province, and the entire population of the Province is estimated at 100,000. The greater number of them are employed on the Canadian Pacific Railway, for whose rapid construction their labour has been indispensable; others are engaged in mines, and market gardening is almost monopolized by them. In the autumn of 1884, Commissioners, appointed by the Dominion Government, visited British Columbia to inquire into the subject, and collect all the evidence they could get. Their report has just been published in Ottawa, and is favourable to the Chinese, whose labour they declare to be absolutely necessary for the construction of railways and public works, and for the development of the country. The evidence, however, which was given before the Commissioners last autumn contains the most contradictory statements as to their moral character. Sir Matthew Begbie, the Chief Justice, declaring that he had been misled in his report by the Chinese servants in his eight years by Chinese men; and the Hon. Mr. Drake, late President of the Council, and one of the most eminent lawyers in Victoria, that "they are utterly unacquainted with truth, and it is a universal comment on their evidence that you cannot believe anything they say." The House of Commons, in reply to this report by passing a resolution to exclude the Chinese, and this week 22 have been sent back to the American coast without being allowed to land here. The captain who brought them over had wisely taken the precaution to exact their return fares before he took them on board.

A Chinaman has usually no intention of becoming a permanent settler in the country. It is his ambition to make enough money to return to China and get a wife; though possibly he may look forward to coming back again to earn more money when the first fortune is expended. Even while the wife remains at home in China. This is one of the strongest reasons for objecting to the Chinese as colonists. Right at the opposite end from Chinatown, that is to say, at the south end of Government Street, is the suburb known as the Point of View, or the Outer Wharf. It is a little rocky peninsula, bounded by the harbour, the inlet, and the open sea, and connected with the town by a wooden bridge which crosses a small branch of the harbour. Facing the harbour and the town are the picturesque Government buildings, comprising of half-a-dozen isolated houses built of red brick in the Swiss chalet style. Here the business and the administration of the affairs of the Province are carried on; here the local legislature sits during the first two months of the year; while within one of the chalet-like houses the Government printing press can be heard busily at work.

The Provincial Parliament is opened early in January with every form and circumstance that can lend dignity to the occasion, by the Lieutenant-Governor, who reads the speech prepared for him by the Premier, the officers of the artillery and the militia attend his honour, and as the *Albatross*

of Victoria is also present the House presents a brilliant and imposing spectacle. The session lasts for about a couple of months, and prayers are read every day by the ministers of the various denominations in turn—by the Lord Bishop of the diocese, and also by his curates, and by the Baptist, Wesleyan, and Presbyterian pastors. The Roman Catholics have declined the invitation given to them. This arrangement, which is accepted as the natural thing by all Canadians, somewhat surprised us English Dissenters.

The present Provincial Parliament is not destitute either of orators or wits. The Hon. Mr. Robson, Provincial Secretary, whose recent speech on the proposed grant to the Canadian Pacific Railway, in consideration of the extension of the line from Port Moody to Coal Harbour, gaining a strong vote for the Government, is perhaps our ablest and most eloquent opponent to be the orator of the day. He spoke with eloquence of the national railway that "would embrace the Orient and the Occident," and foretold the hour to be fast approaching when "commerce would come and bow at the hip of Columbia." As specimens of native wit I must quote Mr. Dunsmuir, who, when a well-known lawyer, moved the resolution that the Chinese be henceforth excluded from the province, at once proposed as an amendment that "no lawbreaker should be allowed to defend them in court," and "no coal merchant be allowed to sell them coal," he himself being the great colliery proprietor.

All male householders who have resided one year in the province enjoy the franchise, while all married women vote along with their husbands for the election of school trustees, unmarried female householders not enjoying the privilege.

In front of the Government buildings well kept lawns, dotted over with ornamental shrubs slope down to the road which skirts one side of the harbour. Here, by the kind permission of Admiral Lyons the land of Her Majesty's ship *Victoria* played every day Saturday afternoon last summer; and when the season's cricket matches were over on Beacon Hill, the Government grounds became the general holiday rendezvous of Victoria. Buggies, low phaetons, and basket carriages, generally driven by their owners—Victoria cannot boast more than three or four liveried coachmen—and occasionally one or two girls and men on horseback would assemble between three and four o'clock, and take up positions on the right, while those who had walked would find seats on the steps and terraces, or loiter on the grass. The game was played with a great deal of steady ponies, that a timid lady may drive without fear, and will patiently submit to be led to fences or posts while their mistresses pay calls and do their shopping, are the favourite animals. However, the spirited white charger of Major —, who, spurred, and with martial bearing, rides into Victoria every day from his suburban villa, adapts himself to the ways of the country, and does not disdain to be tied to a post outside the Customs House and Union Club doors.

At these Saturday afternoon gatherings in the Government grounds last summer Admiral Lyons and his fellow-officers were well-known figures; indeed, without the naval elements Victorian society would lack its salt. There is always a man-of-war stationed in the spacious harbour of Esquimalt, and the officers relieve the daily monotony of their lives by giving dinners, lunches, and afternoon dances on board to those residents of Victoria who leave cards for them. The Victorians respond to these civilities by inviting the officers to their picnics and tennis parties. Half a dozen ladies are "at home" for tennis dancing each afternoon a week all through the summer and autumn, and the young midshipmen especially display great real and energy on these occasions. The officers bring with them the latest fashion and latest slang of London society; and it is in some measure owing to the aid thus received that Victorian girls keep abreast with the times and retain the style that in many cases has been acquired in an English boarding school. But in other ways the navy is a link between this distant colony and the "old country." The course of the war in Egypt, for instance, followed with keener personal interest from the fact that several of the officers now distinguishing themselves on the Nile have been entertained and received as familiar guests in Victorian homes.

One thing that specially strikes a stranger, on first mixing with Victorian society, is the objection the more fashionable people have to look upon themselves as colonists. One explanation of this is, doubtless, the youth of the colony. The elder people have all been born in England, and have kept up a constant intercourse with home, often sending their children there to be educated; and thus they do not look upon themselves as other than English people. Many of the Hudson Bay Company's officials, who were for the most part intelligent Scotchmen, in the early days of the settlement married Indian wives; but their children generally consider themselves as belonging to their father's people, and often speak with an accent that would do credit to the Hebrides or even to a lowland county. But one could hardly offend an old British Columbian settler more seriously than by assuming him to be Canadian. The jealousy of Canada and of Canadian influence has, until recently, been a strong feeling; and Canadians have been looked upon as intruders, wishing to reap the good things they have had no share in producing. This feeling, however, is already much modified, and will die away altogether as intercourse between the distant provinces of the Dominion is facilitated by direct railway communication.

During the past year or two a great many young Englishmen have arrived in the Province. These young men have business habits, and command some capital, do well. The young men of good family, for whom no fitting career presents itself at home, and who come out with a few hundred pounds in their pockets, and with vague ideas of farming or cattle raising, are often much disappointed with the realities that meet them. British Columbia is not an agricultural country. It is always cheaper to import wheat and other grain from the great prairies of the North-West Territory than to grow them here. It has been described as "a sea of mountains." In these mountains are hidden vast treasures of coal and iron, which will prove a backbone of strength in the future, but at present the "You know what I mean, don't you know?" young man helplessly confronts them. Among these mountains and closely shut in by them, are high valleys, or table-lands, of park-like character, which are admirably adapted for cattle ranches. But these are ten or twelve days' journey from the railway line, and the traveller along the Fraser knows nothing of them. The cultivation of fruit, at a point as near the Rocky Mountains as this, practically, probably offers the most promising chance to the man of small capital. Victoria is well and cheaply supplied with fruit from California, but fruit growers on the mainland will have the whole of the North-West Territories as far as Winnipeg thrown open to them as a market by the Canadian Pacific Railway. But, alas, the working man, whose family in the busy season will wait with the dawn and help all day with the tedious work of gathering in the fruit, has again the pull over the gentleman.

The timber lands of British Columbia are valuable and extensive, and the lumber trade is already of large dimensions. Besides the various saw-

mills supplying the local demand, which have lately been greatly increased by the construction of the Nanaimo and Esquimalt Railway, there are two mills on the mainland coast which carry on a large shipping business.

The canning of salmon, chiefly for exportation to England, has not been very numerous in the last year or two. The staple food of the country is demand. If a method could be adopted by which *whole* salmon could be successfully canned, there would be great hope for the revival of this industry.

About seventy-five miles to the north of Victoria, on the coast, is Nanaimo, a mining town in the centre of a great coal district. The most important mines that are at present worked in British Columbia are at Wellington, six miles from Nanaimo. An island railway, which should connect Nanaimo with the mainland, has been a great object of contention since the Canadian Pacific Railway terminates on the mainland has long been talked of, and last summer the country was surveyed for this purpose and the line projected. The railway is being constructed by a syndicate, composed chiefly of American capitalists, but with Mr. Robert Dunsmuir, of this Province, the proprietor of the Wellington coal mines, as president. The chief engineer of the line is Mr. Joseph Hunter, whose father laid out the grounds of Balmoral, under the supervision of the late Prince Consort. The contracts for clearing and making the roadway have all been given out, and it is expected that the line will be open for traffic within two years. A line of steamers is certain to connect Coal Harbour, on the mainland, either with Nanaimo or Chemainus on the island coast; and it will then be seen whether Victoria will retain her pre-eminence in the province, or whether for business purposes she will be superseded by Vancouver, as the Pacific terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway has been named. Her natural position and her climate will always make Victoria the favourite place of residence. She is styled a "city of homes" by her American neighbours. There are but few mansions, and the superlatives of magnificence in the rambling suburbs; but spacious one-storied cottages, with verandahs overgrown with honeysuckle and trailing roses, have hitherto been the favourite dwelling houses. The difficulty of getting domestic help has probably been one cause of their popularity; but their beauty and picturesque character, the commonplace villas which are now being built cannot compare with them. However, I must not abuse the villas, for one of them has been converted by us into a very pleasant home.

The climate of Victoria is not so perfect as it is represented. When we arrived in March, crocuses, snowdrops, and daffodils were blooming in the gardens, and the smell of sweet violets filled the air. Within a month the cherry and then the apple trees were in blossom, and there was scarcely a corner of the town where they were not to be seen. Strawberry and wild dogwood covered every old fence, and overran the sides of the gutters. Only for a fortnight in August was the heat too great for walking to be pleasant. However warm the day, a cool southern breeze, blowing across the Olympians, would rise about four o'clock; and, while there were few evenings in which a wrap of some kind was not acceptable. The snow did not vanish from the Olympians before August. When everything in Victoria was covered with frost and snow, and even the dark fir trees were stretched out like white catkins, the streets were sometimes alone and mained dark and sombre. And now that spring has come again, and flowers are once more filling the gardens with perfume, the Olympians have donned their white raiment, and they too look fresh and delicate, and dazzling fair in the sunshine. One feels that among them, if anywhere, must be

the island valley of Avilion,
Where fall not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows chilly.

If the summer evenings are colder the winters are, on the whole, less severe than in England. There are heavy rains in the autumn; and last December we had what was regarded by the older inhabitants as an exceptionally cold "snap." For a fortnight the thermometer registered from eight to fourteen degrees of frost, and this was intensified by the north wind which found its way into every corner of the slightly built frame houses. Every morning the cream in the pantry, the water in the filter, and even the beer had to be thawed; while our China boys put on every day some additional article of clothing, until he more nearly resembled a coyote than anything else. But this state of things, happily, did not last long. In January and February we had mild moist weather, with showers of rain every day; then spring burst suddenly upon us.

A year has passed away since we landed at the Outer Wharf on that lovely Sunday morning in March. England now does not seem to be so far distant from us as Vancouver Island to our friends at home. Indeed, a young Englishman assured me that one of the advantages of Victoria is that it is not "shut off" from the world, or from what has hitherto made our world. "It is only twelve days from London," he continued, speaking as we should have done a year ago of a country place in Surrey or Kent, connected by hourly trains with London. This young fellow's ideas are somewhat ahead of his time, no doubt. Nevertheless, the day is approaching when the wonderful power of steam will practically annihilate distance. At any rate, within a few months we shall be able to travel from Vancouver Island to England without setting foot on foreign soil.

ACCORDING to the *Quebec Chronicle*, there are some favourable features in the port or situation. That journal learns that "the representatives from this port who have visited Europe this winter have returned with an amount of business obtained far in excess of last year, and more than they anticipated. These have sold fairly well, also some descriptions of timber. In this connection the decrease in the production of white pine in the Ottawa district will, it is stated, be about one third less than last year. The demand for white pine square timber has not, however, fallen in the home market. A considerable quantity of this timber is reported still in first hands. On the whole a good spring trade is anticipated. The late freshets have proved somewhat disastrous to mill-owners, but the extent of losses is difficult to ascertain."

THE MANITOBA WHEAT CROP.—The secretary of the Farmers' Union of Manitoba reports that the crop is a more abundant crop, in better condition, will be harvested this year than last, and this will to a large extent compensate for any smaller acreage that may be sown. It is noteworthy that the entire western portions of Canada are undergoing a marked change in the more extended pursuit of mixed farming rather than the exclusive growth of grain. The estimate is that with an average crop Manitoba alone will have a surplus of fully three million bushels of wheat to export from this year's crop, or one-third more than last season. There is, in addition, the vast wheat area of the Canadian North-West Territories, reports from which would tend to show that the yield will be about the average, while greater care has been generally noticeable among the farmers in the preparation of the soil and choice of seed.